

Spring 1-15-2000

## ENG 3099C-099: Myth and Culture (Honors)

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ENGLISH 3099C  
**MYTH AND CULTURE (HONORS)**

SPRING 2000

Dr. Carol D. Stevens



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Office Hours: 11-12 and 2-3 Tues. and Thurs., 4-5 Wed., and walk-ins or appointments any time my office door is open and I'm not crunching a major deadline on something for another course.

**Course Description:** Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, we will examine relationships among mythical, historical, anthropological, and scientific ways of understanding. We will be reading primary texts of myths as well as secondary criticism, and the class will consist of lecture and discussion based upon these readings.

**Course Objectives:**

- to break down cultural misunderstandings and barriers
- to recognize similarities among cultures
- to learn what myths are and how they function
- to learn about cultures that may be unfamiliar
- to learn more about our own cultures and mythologies
- to learn different ways of approaching and interpreting cultures and texts

**Course Texts:**

- Dundes. *Sacred Narrative*.
- Erdoes and Ortiz, eds. *American Indian Myths and Legends*.
- Harris and Platzner, eds. *Classical Mythology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.
- Humphries, ed. *Metamorphoses*.
- Lhalungpa. *The Life of Milarepa*.
- Sandars, ed. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.
- Sproul. *Primal Myths*.
- Tedlock. *Popol Vuh*.
- Zolbrod. *Dine Bahane*.

UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED IN CLASS, YOUR GRADE WILL BE BASED UPON

1. Three papers on assigned topics, approximately 4-5 pages each, requiring some research and additional reading, worth 50 points apiece. (One of them will require you to read a novel which makes substantial use of the mythology we've been reading.)
  2. A mid-term exam worth 30 points
  3. A final exam worth 60 points
  4. Attendance with lively and SUBSTANTIVE participation, group work, quizzes, shorter writings 60 points
- Total: 300 points—300-275=A, 274-249=B, 248-215=C, 190-215=D, below 190=F

→Late work will be penalized. Papers: Must be typed, double-spaced, in MLA style, and must be on the assigned topics. (Consult the Writing Center if you are unfamiliar with MLA style.)

### Responsibilities and policies:

- You must turn in ALL assigned writing to pass the course, as well as accumulating sufficient point totals.
- Your written work for the course needs to be available as specified in the assignment handouts you receive, subject to any modifications mutually agreed upon by the instructor and the entire class.
- Class discussion and quizzes or short discussion-oriented writing cannot be made up, as the sole purpose of these is to assure readiness for the discussion that follows. If you're not here for the class discussion, the quiz is pointless.
- You are required to be here for all class meetings, and two points will be deducted for each class meeting missed (four for the class before or after a break); points for quizzes and group work will probably be lost as well. Excused absences may be given for such reasons as serious illness or major family emergency (such as a death in the family). Students who establish patterns of absence (last class before the weekend, last class before a break or first class after) must be reported at mid-term to the registration office. But experience has shown me that what my students can learn from each other is at least as important as what they learn from me. Be here, be prepared, and engage in the dialogue because it's important, and because we all value what you can give, not because of your grades.

### Ground rules for discussion:

1. We offer our experience as our truth, and agree to respect the experiences of the others in our class
2. We acknowledge that our experience is limited, and that limited experience may cause us to draw shaky conclusions.
3. We agree actively to pursue information about the subjects we are studying, to avoid stereotypes, and to encourage thought.
4. We agree to share what we think and believe *without demeaning or devaluing anyone else's beliefs or experiences.*
5. We agree to create an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe to discuss the material openly.

### Academic honesty, research, written work etc:

I regard any violation of academic honesty including misappropriation of sources, unauthorized help, cheating on exams etc. with the utmost seriousness and will apply penalties severely. Students who transgress will certainly receive an F for the assignment. Cheating, plagiarism, and faulty documentation on papers and exams will most likely result in an F for the assignment, and probably an F for the course. ANY incident of academic dishonesty will be reported to Judicial Board.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the coordinator of disability services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Course assignments:** You will receive an outline of assignments and due dates. Please keep up with it unless otherwise instructed, even if we are discussing something different in class.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Every effort has been made to spell out policies clearly. Some changes may occur in the normal course of any semester. For any alteration of assignment or policy, an announcement in class will be considered sufficient notice, so take care! Remaining in the course after these policies have been discussed and clarified signals that you have accepted them and agree to abide by them.

**Course plan:** The course will begin with a general discussion of what the terms "myth" and "culture" mean, and will be divided roughly into three units. Each unit will include primary sources (the myths and legends), secondary material such as critical and theoretical reading, and some popular culture references to myth, such as films.

1. Near Eastern and European myths, including *Gilgamesh*—January 11 through Feb. 10
2. Native American, including Mayan, and Navajo—February 8 through March 23
3. Buddhist and other Asian myths and legends—March 28 through April 27

You will receive due dates for all paper assignments the first week of the semester, and the reading assignments in the two weeks immediately preceding each unit. However, it is possible from the above outline and information given in class to prepare the reading well in advance, and it's a good idea to do so. Paper assignments are sequenced to reflect your increasing understanding as we progress through the units. Due dates will coincide roughly with the dates for completion of units. Figure on about three to four weeks' lead time for each paper assignment, and approximately one week to prepare for the midterm. The preparation for the final will be during the last class meeting of the semester.

Due Dates for Papers:

Paper #1 Tuesday, Feb. 15

Paper #2 Thursday, March 24

Paper #3 Tuesday, April 25

The Mid-Term Exam will be on Thursday, February 24.

The Final Exam, according to the online Spring Semester Class Schedule, will be on Monday, May 1, from 2:45 to 4:45. Please note that the University Catalogue specifically excludes leaving for break early and transportation as reasons for changing the time of the final exam. Plan NOW to be there, and if your ride is leaving early, I'll gladly help you find alternate transportation.

English 3099 Myth and Culture Honors Section 99  
Syllabus Segment I  
January 11, 2000  
Near Eastern and European Myths

Please note: Dates given are the dates the material is scheduled to be discussed in class. Be sure to have it read by then. Preparations for these classes will also include assigned work on the first paper, and selected handouts which may include questions to prepare for discussion of the readings, supplementary myths etc. If we watch a video in class, you can expect to be held responsible for it.

January 11—Introductions, questionnaire, course policies, working toward some definitions of myth. View *Fantasia* "Rite of Spring" sequence and discuss relationships and distinctions between myth and science in relation to narrative.

January 13—Read in *Sacred Narrative*, Bascom's essay "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives"

January 18—*Primal Myths, "Enuma Elish"*

January 20—continue "Enuma Elish" and begin work on first paper

January 25—*Epic of Gilgamesh*

January 27—Continue *Gilgamesh*

February 1—Continue *Gilgamesh*

February 3—Conclude *Gilgamesh*, watch related video, group work

Feb. 8—Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Books 1 and 2

Feb. 10—Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Books 3 and 4

Feb. 15—Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 5. First paper due at the BEGINNING of class.